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European Union

Food and Agricultural Import Regulations and Standards

Food Contact Materials - EU Proposal

2003

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Report Highlights:

"Active" and "intelligent" food packaging: the European Commission proposes new rules on food contact materials.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Brussels USEU [BE2]
[E2]

Food Contact Materials

On November 17, 2003, the European Commission proposed a revised regulation on food contact materials. Food contact materials are all items intended to come into contact with food such as plastic wrappings and glass bottles, as well as objects like coffee machines and soup spoons. The proposed changes include a more modern approach to the principle that packaging materials should not trigger any chemical reactions, which might change the food's taste, appearance, texture or smell or alters its chemical composition. Under the existing legislation, this principle applies even if the chemical changes are beneficial.

The proposed changes would clear the way for the introduction of "active" and "intelligent" packaging that, for example, prolongs shelf life or monitors or displays information about the freshness of food. Active components would be allowed as long as they comply with other EU legislation on food safety. Labeling will inform the users about the nature of the active packaging. The proposal also establishes traceability requirements so that materials coming into contact with food are identified at all stages of production and distribution.

The proposal will now be sent to the Council and to the European Parliament for a first reading in the co-decision procedure.

The proposal can be downloaded from the Internet at http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2003/com2003_0689en01.pdf.

Visit our website: our website www.useu.be/agri/usda.html provides a broad range of useful information on EU import rules and food laws and allows easy access to USEU reports, trade information and other practical information. More information on food contact materials can be found at www.useu.be/agri/packaging.html.
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